

In July and August 1934 I came across this Bee-eater from Ghari Khairo to Kashmor in the Upper Sind Frontier (Jacobabad district), and on the 20th July found a scattered colony of about two score birds breeding in the banks of an old Kario and in mounds in semi desert between Thull and Tangwani. In September birds were still to be seen along the Desert and Begari canals but were fewer in numbers.

At the end of November I failed to meet with it anywhere.

In Nawabshah district I saw many birds in flight in May and June 1935. On the 9th May a single bird passed over Nawabshah, shortly after a terrific dust storm.

It was calling loudly and evidently had been separated from the flock during the storm. It was obviously in distress but struggled on manfully in a north-easterly direction, calling pitifully at short intervals.

Near Tharushah on the 14th July I came across about a score of birds in pairs or single in suitable breeding ground alongside a canal, but did not have the time to look for nests. I also found a small scattered colony in a similar situation along the Rohri canal, near Saurie about 35 miles from Sakrand, but here also I did not have the time to look round for nests, the predominance of single birds however told a plain tale.

When at Umarmkot in Thar Parkar district in February 1936, a Meghwar *shikari* informed me that numbers of this Bee-eater arrived in the district in May and bred in the sand *bhitis* throughout the desert portions of the district.

This bird is well known in Sind as 'Wado Tracalo', and the smaller species, the Sind Green Bee-eater (*Merops orientalis beludschicus* Neum) as 'Nando Tracalo'.

KARACHI,

October 10, 1938.

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Indian Police.

XVII.—HAUNT AND HABITAT OF *PITTA C. CUCULLATA* HARTL. IN WEST BENGAL.

(With a plate).

During an excursion in quest of breeding birds to Satgachia (District Burdwan), which lies 20 miles east of Burdwan town, on 23rd June, 1935 I came across a pair of *Pitta c. cucullata* Hartl., one of which was captured with the aid of a bird-catcher who happened to be with me. The occurrence of this species is unknown in Western Bengal, and it is therefore of interest to record the circumstances connected with my excursion.

The location of Satgachia is attractive in many ways, but apart from its physical peculiarities which are described below, and its accessibility by motor road, the fact that an acquaintance lives there;

whose repeated invitation for my visit to his country bore pointed reference to the prospect of an almost untrodden field from a bird-collector's point of view, was enough inducement for this excursion. An exceptionally protracted summer, however, with its attendant discomforts made an earlier trip impossible. A few showers having occurred preliminary to the breaking of the monsoon which helped to bring down the temperature I found my opportunity and at once decided to come out. The trip was made on June 23, 1935 in my motor car. The drive *via* the Grand Trunk Road was at once enjoyable and instructive, as I had a chance of looking at the countryside, which embraces long stretches of the contiguous districts of Howrah, Hooghly and Burdwan. The approach to my destination lay through a feeder road, which takes off from the main road at mile 56. As I reached the outskirts of Satgachia I perceived a difference in the outlook, specially in vegetation and in the upward trend of the level of the land. The thickets and scrub-jungle on the bed and along the banks of the river Banka arrested special attention and I obtained a few interesting species from this locality, e.g. *Pycnonotus luteolus* Less. (reported in *J.B.N.H.S.*, xxxviii, 620-21, 1936). The neighbourhood, to the north, alongside the Kalna Road reveals other interesting spots overgrown with scrub jungle, where I was busy collecting in the afternoon. My prospect was about to be marred, however, by the gathering clouds which so overcast the sky that I felt inclined to return, when I heard from a short distance some loud notes, very like those of the Indian Pitta, which is not uncommon in Bengal. Following these sounds, I reached an orchard at the far end of a low-lying and grass-covered field bordered with bamboos. It seemed less frequented and was overgrown with fruit trees interspersed with patches of scrub and prickly thickets. Here as I anticipated, I came upon, a pair of *Pittas*. In the approaching gloom of the evening made darker by the thickening clouds, I could hardly discern them clearly, but what little I saw of them left me in no doubt as to their behaviour, which was evidently of courtship,—erect posture with characteristically Pitta-like movements of the body and tail, and loud impetuous calls, uttered almost alternately by the couple. As I came closer I saw clearly on the ground two moving figures, hopping about and almost challenging each other by gesture and voice. On my approach they flew up to a mango tree. I set my catcher on to them and, in a minute one was caught. To my utter surprise I found it to be a *Pitta c. cucullata* Hartl. The rain had now burst with terrific force, making me retreat for shelter, and when it stopped, full thirty minutes later, my search for the second bird proved in vain. For it was too late then, and no clue was found as to any possible nest of the Pitta in the neighbourhood. The exquisite condition of plumage of the captured specimen, its time of occurrence and incidental behaviour bespeaking courtship display, suggests that it is obviously a breeding species of the locality. It has since been thriving in my aviary.

Measurements: Wing 114 mm., tail 42 mm., tarsus 43 mm., culmen 23 mm.



Fig. 1.—Swamp and marsh fed by overflow water of the river Banka.



Fig. 2.—Aspect of the 'transition belt' along the course of the Banka. Stretches of waste land overgrown with scrub- and bush-jungle.

